

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ruth Campbell

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Campbell, Ruth, 1939-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Ruth Campbell,
<b>Dates:</b>	May 24, 2017
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2017
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:17:05).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Producer and public relations director Ruth Campbell (1939 - 2020) hosted Mississippi's longest running minority-oriented public affairs series and served as deputy director of the City of Jackson Department of Human and Cultural Services. Campbell was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 24, 2017, in Jackson, Mississippi. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2017_101
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Producer and public relations director Ruth Campbell was born on June 30, 1939 in Benton, Mississippi to Viola Brice and Cleophas Batton. Campbell received her A.A. degree from Coahoma Junior College in Clarksdale, Mississippi in 1959, her B.S. degree in language arts from Jackson State College in Natchez, Mississippi, in 1961, and her M.A. degree from the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, Mississippi in 1970.

Campbell taught English, French, public speaking and literature as a public school teacher before she worked with the Mississippi Research and Development Center as a market analyst. She later entered broadcasting at the Mississippi Authority for Educational Television, where she served as host of the longest running minority-oriented public affairs series in the state. She served as script editor, producer, director, and became the executive producer for all public affairs programming at the network. Then, Campbell was appointed special assistant of scheduling to the Governor of Mississippi, Ray Mabus. Campbell then served for four years as associate director at the Jackson State University School of Lifelong Learning, where she also taught speech and mass communication. She then worked as manager of customer service at Trilogy Communications, Inc. and as public relations director for MetroCenter Mall. In 1999, Campbell became the public information officer for the City of Jackson's Parks and Recreation. In 2008, Campbell became the deputy director for the Jackson's Department of Human and Cultural Services.

Campbell has received numerous awards and honors for her contributions to her community. She has been the recipient of a Humanitarian Award from the University of Southern Mississippi, Presidential Citation for Alumni of the Year Award, a Distinguished Leadership Award from the Pearl Street AME Church, and a Founders Award from the National Black Programming Consortium, among others.

Campbell chaired the National Black Programming Consortium and also served on the advisory board for Catholic Charities, the advisory council for 21st Century Community Learning Center, and as a member of the National

Coalition of 100 Black Women, and Friends of Public Broadcasting, which is within the Mississippi Educational Television Network.

Ruth Campbell was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on May 24, 2017.

Campbell passed away on March 27, 2020.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Ruth Campbell was conducted by Denise Gines on May 24, 2017, in Jackson, Mississippi, and was recorded on 5 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Producer and public relations director Ruth Campbell (1939 - 2020) hosted Mississippi's longest running minority-oriented public affairs series and served as deputy director of the City of Jackson Department of Human and Cultural Services.

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## Restrictions

### Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

### Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

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## Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Campbell, Ruth, 1939-

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Campbell, Ruth, 1939- --Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## Occupations:

Public Relations Director

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers

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## Administrative Information

### Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

### Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Ruth Campbell, May 24, 2017. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

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## Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Ruth Campbell, Section A2017\_101\_001\_001, TRT: 1:29:54 ?

Ruth Campbell was born on June 30, 1939 in Benton, Mississippi to Viola Brice

and Cleophas Batton. Her mother was born in the Foxhill community of Nassau in the Bahamas. After Campbell's maternal parents, Clara Cooper Brice and Wilfred Brice, were lost at sea during a fishing trip, Campbell's mother and her two brothers went to live with their grandmother in Miami, Florida. Campbell's mother aspired to become an opera singer, and sang at various colleges before relocating to New York City. Campbell spent her early years with her paternal grandparents, Mary Davis Batton and Willie Batton. Her paternal grandfather's family migrated from Georgia to Mississippi, where he became a tenant farmer and grew cotton. As a 32nd Degree Mason, he was well respected in the community. Later, Campbell was raised by her father and stepmother, Thelma Perkins Batton, who was born in Shaw, Mississippi. They met at the Piney Woods Country Life School, a boarding school for African Americans in Piney Woods, Mississippi.

Video Oral History Interview with Ruth Campbell, Section A2017\_101\_001\_002, TRT: 2:29:04 ?

Ruth Campbell grew up in Yazoo County, Mississippi, where she was placed in the care of her paternal grandparents, Mary Davis Batton and Willie Batton, at two weeks old. She briefly lived with her father and stepmother, Cleophas Batton and Thelma Perkins Batton, in Chicago, Illinois, returning to Mississippi with her grandparents when her father enlisted in World War II. Campbell then began her education at a two-room schoolhouse called the Orange Hill School. She once befriended a white neighbor, but ended the acquaintance when she was relegated to eating in the kitchen at the girl's house. After Campbell's father returned from the war, he was stationed at Chanute Field in Champaign County, Illinois. Campbell joined her stepmother on the South Side of Chicago, where she entered the third grade at Edmund Burke Elementary School. During this time, she frequented Grant Park, and saw figure skater Sonja Henie perform. Campbell also remembers meeting her birth mother, Viola Brice, for the first time.

Video Oral History Interview with Ruth Campbell, Section A2017\_101\_001\_003, TRT: 3:29:16 ?

Ruth Campbell lived with her parents, Cleophas Batton and Thelma Perkins Batton, in Chicago, Illinois. The family took frequent trips to the South, and stayed at the Peabody Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee, although it was not integrated at the time. While Campbell's father was stationed in Germany during World War II, she and her stepmother listened to news of the war on the radio. Soon after his return, they relocated to Columbus, Ohio, where Campbell attended Felton Elementary School and saw a concert by Marian Anderson. Although Campbell belonged to the African Methodist Episcopal church, she was exposed to numerous religions as her family moved to different military bases. In the fifth grade, she returned to live with her paternal grandparents, Mary Davis Batton and Willie Batton, in Benton, Mississippi, where she excelled academically and enjoyed watching movies. Then, Campbell attended George P. Phenix High School in Hampton, Virginia while her father was stationed at the Langley Air Force Base.

Video Oral History Interview with Ruth Campbell, Section A2017\_101\_001\_004, TRT: 4:31:28 ?

Ruth Campbell completed the eighth grade at George P. Phenix High School in Hampton, Virginia. From there, her family relocated to Omaha, Nebraska, where she briefly attended Technical High School before transferring to Omaha North High School. As one of ten African American students there, Campbell was unfairly graded by a racist teacher. However, her grades improved once her stepmother, Thelma Perkins Batton, met with the teacher. In 1955, Campbell and her stepmother accompanied her father, Cleophas Batton, on his assignment to Okinawa Island, Japan. During their travels, they stopped in Tokyo, Japan and

Taipei, Taiwan, where they encountered villagers who were curious about their darker skin. On Okinawa Island, her family lived in Awase Meadows while her father was stationed at the Kadena Air Base. Campbell attended Kadena High School, which was an American military dependent school. Although the school was integrated, the parents objected to Campbell acting opposite a white classmate in the school play.

Video Oral History Interview with Ruth Campbell, Section A2017\_101\_001\_005, TRT: 5:17:23 ?

Ruth Campbell spent her junior and senior years at Kadena High School on Okinawa Island, Japan. She learned to speak Japanese, and worked as a tour guide for American tourists. In her spare time, she frequented the teen center and visited other army bases, like Camp Sukiran. Although she did not swim, she often accompanied her friends to White Beach. She also became acquainted with the servicemen, who encouraged her academic achievements. While on Okinawa Island, Campbell's family employed a maid, but her stepmother, Thelma Perkins Batton, still required that she complete chores. She was prohibited from attending prom with a white classmate, and was escorted by an African American student from a lower grade instead. When Campbell was cast in the lead role of her school's production of 'Our Miss Brooks,' many parents voiced their concerns about her starring opposite a white student. The students supported Campbell, and she was chosen to lead an alternate play.